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ABSTRACT

An objective of the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in its agenda for change is diplomacy for global competitiveness (DGC). For the language school, this means training to enable students to actively and skillfully represent the United States abroad, take leadership roles furthering U.S. competitiveness, understand the target culture and be able to function linguistically and otherwise within it, explain and advocate effectively American values, systems, and products, and promote relations between the U.S. and the host country. A list of general principles guides its implementation, and an extensive list of topics relevant to DGC, with reference to both the U.S. and target countries, has been developed. These topics range from economic and commercial issues through politics, social issues, culture, and environment. FSI language classes aim at equipping students with general professional proficiency, at Level 3 in oral skills. It uses a variety of teaching methods and a curriculum that includes complex knowledge of the target country. Under DGC, officers need to be both knowledgeable about the target culture and language and also be activists for the United States within that culture's values and traditions. This requires considerable conversational skills and strategies to present policies favorably. (MSE)

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LANGUAGE TRAINING IN THE CONTEXT OF DIPLOMACY FOR GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS AT THE FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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1. History of the Foreign Service Institute

On August 13, 1946, President Harry Truman signed into law the Foreign Service Act, authorizing the creation of the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), which was to become the training arm of the State Department. At the time, FSI provided language training to diplomats departing for their overseas assignments. All foreign languages were taught by native "tutors", as they were called, under the supervision of linguists. Once our students became proficient in the language of their assignment, they were sent overseas, expected to watch their predecessor, or a senior officer at work, and learn on the job as quickly as they could.

Today FSI teaches over 60 languages:

Albanian	Greek	Polish
Afrikaans	Hebrew	*Portuguese*
Amharic	Hindi	*Romanian*
Armenian	Hungarian	Russian
Azerbaijani	Icelandic	Serbo-Croatian
Bengali	Indonesian	Sinhala
Bulgarian	*Italian*	Slovak
Burmese	**Japanese**	*Spanish*
Byelarussian	Korean	Swahili
Cantonese	Khmer	*Swedish*
Chinese	Lao	Tagalog (Pilipino)
Creole	Latvian	Thai
Czech	Lithuanian	Turkish
Danish	Malay	Ukrainian
Dari	**Mandarin**	Urdu
Dutch	Mongolian	Uzbek
Estonian	**NAfr Arabic**	Vietnamese
Finnish	Nepali	
French	*Norwegian*	
German	**Persian**	**Afghan**
Georgian		**Iranian**
		Tajik

Note: *Italics mark 23-week courses*, plain font, 44-week courses and **bolded, 2-year courses**.

It has pioneered a system of language proficiency testing and is recognized as a world leader in developing high quality intensive language training. Our courses range from 8 weeks for Familiarization and Short Term Courses in most languages, to 23-week courses in world languages, 44-week courses in hard languages and 2 years, one in Washington, one overseas in superhard languages (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean). Most language classes are full-time intensive, meeting 5-6 hours a day, 5 days a week.

FSI also teaches area and professional studies, including political, economic, administrative, computer, management and office skill courses. Consular training is taught entirely by simulation. A Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs offers 50 to 60 symposia a year and conducts study and research in the field of foreign affairs. The Overseas Briefing Center is the main source of information for family members. Specialized training added a whole new dimension to the formation of our students. Once they left FSI, they were not only proficient in a foreign language, they had substantive training in their specialized field as well.

After having resided in rented quarters for almost half a century, FSI has just moved into its own quarters, a campus built to our requirements and equipped with state of the art technology, in Arlington, Virginia. Set on a 72-acre wooded site, the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC) is the new home for our students and staff. The physical move to the National Foreign Affairs Training Center has triggered a series of initiatives included under the name of "Agenda for Change." At the same time that we are changing our location and work conditions, we are also seeking to push our training to a "higher level of excellence and relevance." One of the elements of the FSI Agenda for Change is *Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness (DGC).*

2. What is Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness?

Lawrence Taylor, the Director of FSI, described this initiative as follows:

*"**Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness** has become a central organizing theme for all FSI training, not just limited to training for economic/commercial work and business facilitation, but also to be integrated with science and technology, the environment, language and area studies, as well as FSI's traditional courses in political, administrative and consular training. Our curriculum should tie those factors together in ways that help our missions to perform better in advancing U.S. competitiveness and in assisting the U.S. private sector abroad."*

3. Goal and Objectives of the DGC Initiative for the School of Language Studies (SLS)

The **goal** of this initiative is to train all students in the **spirit** of *Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness,* in order to help U.S. Missions perform better in advancing U.S. general competitiveness and in assisting the U.S. private sector.

The **objectives** of the training are to enable all students to actively and skillfully represent the U.S. abroad; to take leadership roles furthering U.S. competitiveness; to understand the target culture and be able to function linguistically and otherwise within it; to explain and advocate effectively American values, systems, and products, and to promote relations between the U.S. and the host country.

4. General Principles for Implementation

- *Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness* (DGC) should tie together all training areas at FSI, from junior officer courses, to area studies, professional studies and language classes.
- DGC applies to all foreign affairs personnel, regardless of their field, and also to spouses.
- DGC covers a wide range of topics, applied to both the target country and the US.
- Topics and skills relevant to the concept of DGC are to be interleaved with existing training by either supplementing or reshaping segments of our training.
- The main focus of our language training has been, and remains, to enable our students to learn the language, culture and develop cross-cultural understanding of the host country. Within the concept of DGC, this focus needs to be expanded to incorporate training students to effectively describe, explain and defend American issues and policies to members of the target culture.
- It is, of course, essential that our graduates understand how the foreign culture operates and be able to interpret and analyze events within it well, but DGC also means that they must be effective representatives of America who can explain and defend American points of view to representatives of the host culture.
- Within the concept of DGC, it is no longer sufficient only to teach the target language, the culture to which the language is connected, and cross-cultural understanding. Our graduates must "know their territory" both ways. Having high-level knowledge of the target country's economic system, for example, and being able to talk about it in the target language must be accompanied by being at least equally articulate when describing the U.S. economy. Our graduates must be equipped with the right language skills to make the transition from being "analysts" to becoming "activists."
- DGC is not restricted to commerce, economics and politics. To apply the concepts of global competitiveness, we can use the metaphor of a newspaper. We should not focus only on the business section of a newspaper. The front page or the "style" or "sports" sections are equally important in enabling officers to be competitive. With no frivolity intended, the ability to participate in "educated, assertive chat" is an objective of this initiative.
- The need for specific training for those officers who specialize in economic-commercial work is clear, but training for DGC should apply to everybody and be of interest to everybody.

5. Topics Relevant to DGC referring both to the target culture AND to the U.S.

ECONOMICS / COMMERCE

market (bargaining, tipping)
counting
currency (exchange)
local food supplies
advertisement

Economic geography
location of target country and the U.S.
regions, climate
production of goods
industries

Economic-commercial system
type of econ system in target country and the US (capitalistic, planned economy, free enterprise)
GDP (Gross Domestic Product)
balance of trade/payments
merges and acquisitions (takeovers, buyovers)
savings / inflation / recession / depression

Financial system and banking
stock market in the US versus overseas
banking system (borrowing, lending, checking accounts)
concept of bankruptcy
investments
real estate
taxes

Natural resources
minerals
agricultural products (cotton, wool, etc.)
fishing
raw materials
forestry
tourism

Infrastructure
communications
road system
high tech (computers, telecommunications)
airlines

Trade
foreign and domestic trade
shipping

POLITICS

register residence
ID cards (passport, driver's license, car registration)

Political system
democratic, authoritarian, etc.
parties
electoral system (polls, campaigning, funding, bribing, scandals)
type and branches of the government (monarchy, democracy, parliamentary)

Legal system
courts of justice

judicial system
police (including the secret police, security forces)
lawyers (including their status)

The Military
structure and branches of the armed forces
general staff
military recruitment
defense
conventional and nuclear weapons

Foreign/domestic policy
integration among countries
treaties
agreements
territorial disputes
minorities
language policies

Human rights
freedom of speech
equal rights
the right to vote
upward mobility
class system

SOCIAL ISSUES

interaction
manners
acceptable and unacceptable behavior
social strata

Population
occupations
population distribution and growth
urbanization (e.g., in Europe the well to do people move to the city, in the U.S. to the suburbs)
migration, emigration and transmigration (government operated or individually sought relocation)

Education/child care
educational system
schooling (from day care to postgraduate programs)
apprenticeships and universities
adult education
language / literacy rate

Standard of living
average income
average cost of living
housing (slums, etc.)
poverty vs affluence

the concept of "luxury"
spending habits

Gender issues
role of women
emancipation of women
women's rights
sexual harassment
household scenarios
sexual preferences

Workers' rights
social security
unions (ie, codetermination)
arbitrations
labor laws
workers' benefits (ie, retirement, insurance, paid vacation time)

Social integration
immigration
in country cross-cultural communication (with country nationals and foreigners)
age issues

Ethnic issues
ethnic issues concerning neighboring countries and ethnic groups within the target country (ie, chauvinism, racism, prejudice, nationalism, religious disputes)

Crime issues, drugs
drug addiction
alcoholism
prostitution
shoplifting
mugging
violent crime (holdups, stickups, carjacking, highjacking, kidnapping)
gun (gun control)
white collar crime
bribery

CULTURE

holidays
social gatherings (appointments, dating, ceremonies)
dress code
shopping habits
gift giving
making reservations, buying tickets

History
milestones in history
history as perceived and taught in the target country
historical prejudice

Religion(s)
holidays

coexistence of different religions
role of religion, philosophy, church, clergy
separation of church and state (e.g., secularism)
religion in art, literature
cults and sects

Customs and traditions
origin and celebration of holidays
birth, marriage and death traditions
festivals
folklore
business and negotiation
relationships
expectations (including bribing)

Value system
family
moral issues
ethics
money / wealth

Life style, entertainment
scheduling, perception of time
leisure (hobbies)
pace of life and daily activities

Regional sensitivities
cultural sensitivities within the country
racism, chauvinism, sexism
political groupings and movements

Art and literature
everything pertaining to specific countries and the U.S. (not just know about it, experience it too)

The media
role of the media
government involvement in the media, censorship
role of foreign news agencies in the target country
impact of modern technology on news coverage

Sports
role of sports in the society
popular sports, players, events
competitive vs leisure sports
funding/government involvement in sports activities

ENVIRONMENT

leaded vs unleaded gas
recycling
trash disposal

drinking water
noise control rules
food protection standards

Urbanization
littering
living quarters and recreational space
population and the environment

Energy and transportation
public and private means of transportation
price of energy
sources of energy (hydropower, nuclear power, etc.)
energy policies (rules and regulations, restrictions)

Pollution
international agreements
everything pertaining to specific countries and the U.S.

Preservation of the environment
international agreements; differences of interpretation
standards and policies
environmental industry

Some of these topics are obviously germane. Others may be less obvious, but the task force has seen that they could be relevant. For example, "prostitution" a topic that may at first seem unlikely to fit into the Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness scenario, could be thrown on the table by a hostile counterpart in a foreign country. It could therefore be linked conceptually with Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness in the following way:

* *Be aware, through authentic materials, of the changes that occured over the past ten years in a well publicized area, such as 14th Street in Washington, DC;*
* *Without denying the fact that prostitution indeed exists, focus on steps that have been taken by either/both the local government or support groups, and highlight their achievements;*
* *While talking about a social problem with its inherent negative aspects, stress the actions that have been taken to correct it, and, when applicable, what clearly detaches the U.S. from the target country, e.g., interlocutors from a country that has no notion of support groups for street youth, etc. may have something to learn from our country's efforts to correct the downsides of our society, one of them being the grim aspect of night life.*

  Prostitution may also be an issue in the target country. One way to disarm hostility is to encourage an interlocutor to describe how their country manages the forces that lead to this kind of social problem. This may in turn lead to a new set of markets for U.S. expertise, products, or cooperation.
* *Prostitution is also a key topic in AIDS prevention and public health.*

6. What language proficiency we train for

Most FSI full-time language classes aim at equiping graduating students with general professional proficiency, or Level 3 in speaking, according to the Interagency Language Roundtable/Language Skill Level Descriptions:

> ***Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics.*** *Nevertheless, the individual's limitations generally restrict the professional contexts of language use to matters of shared knowledge and/or international convention. Discourse is cohesive. The individual uses the language acceptably, but with some noticeable imperfections; yet, errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. The individual can effectively combine structure and vocabulary to convey his/her meaning accurately. The individual speaks readily and fills pauses suitably. In face-to-face conversation with natives speaking the standard dialect at a normal rate of speech, comprehension is quite complete. Although cultural references, proverbs and the implications of nuances and idiom may not be fully understood, the individual can easily repair the conversation. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Individual sounds are accurate; but stress, intonation, and pitch control may be faulty.*
>
> ***Examples****: Can typically discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease. Can use the language as part of normal professional duties such as answering objections, clarifying points, justifying decisions, understanding the essence of challenges, stating and defending policy, conducting meetings, delivering briefings, or other extended and elaborate informative monologues. Can readily elicit information and informed opinion from native speakers. Structural inaccuracy is rarely the major cause of misunderstanding. Use of structural devices is flexible and elaborate. Without searching for words or phrases, the individual uses the language clearly and relatively naturally to elaborate concepts freely and make ideas easily understandable to native speakers. Errors occur in low-frequency and highly complex structures.*

7. How we train for the Level 3 language proficiency and where DGC fits in

FSI uses a variety of teaching methods, from remnants of audio-lingual teaching to the silent approach, to the natural approach, all aiming at improving our students' communicative kills. The textbooks, most of which are produced at FSI, or if not, adapted to FSI - use, are supplemented with cross-cultural and professional modules so that students become familiar with the cultural issues of the country of their assignment and receive special language instruction pertinent to their field. Administrative, Consular, Cultural, Economic, Military, Political Modules are taught throughout the school, in some languages for the duration of the course, in others in the second half of language training, when students are ready to tackle such matters at a higher level of proficiency.

Training that encompasses complex knowledge of the target country has enbled our graduates to become effective analysts. Quoting FSI Director Lawrence Taylor again,

Through Diplomacy for Global Competitiveness we aim to develop the skillful and resourceful ***activists*** *needed to take a leadership role on behalf of U.S. competitiveness in a rapidly globalizing and increasingly complex world economy: activists, for example, who can anticipate and thereby prevent new barriers to U.S. exports, who can open markets to U.S. business; activists capable of fighting for America's economic interests in areas such as trade in services, financial market liberalization, intellectual property, information and health care technologies, etc.,* ***and doing so with foreign language fluency and knowledge on how to be effective in other cultures;*** *activists who understand and can act upon the reality that the interplay between America's competitive excellence and American diplomacy will go far in determining standards of living at home and our power abroad.*

As stated before, DGC implies much more than simply a new focus on economic and commercial issues in training. It includes developing any and all skills and knowledge which contribute to the ability to communicate with representatives of other nations in ways that throw the best possible light on policies, activities, and needs of the United States in the context of the cultural values and traditions of that nation.

To accomplish this requires individuals who are deeply knowledgeable of both American and the host country's cultures and policies and who have a strong proficiency in the language. More than this, however, it requires developing the skills to comprehend nuance, allusion and connotation in spoken and written language and to speak the language in ways that encode American interests in the most culturally appropriate and effective ways.

Lawrence Taylor has said of DGC, *The whole point is to be* ***effective*** *at doing the work.* Effectiveness entails much more than the ability to use the language in controlled situations such as prepared presentations or interviews with locals. Experienced officers say that it is important to be able to establish and maintain personal and professional relationships with people of many kinds. Such relationships typically depend in part on an officer's ability to take part comfortably in educated colloquial conversations about wide varieties of serious and not-so-serious topics. This kind of conversation has been described by one such officer as **educated assertive chat**. Whatever it is called, it seems clear that skill and comfort in its use in a variety of social settings has become critically important in the new global environment.

8. Why focus on teaching conversational skills?

Under DGC, officers not only need to be knowledgeable about the culture and language of the country, they need to be activists within that culture. To promote American interests abroad, American representatives have a great need to be able to manage informed, culturally relevant and appropriate conversations with nationals. For example, if people in a certain culture do not like American policies, foreign service officers need to be aware of this, know why each policy is disliked, what cultural values are relevant to the policy, and **what approach they should use in discussing the policy to present it most favorably** -- all in the framework of ordinary conversation, rather than in formal demarches.

We are currently working on a series of training workshops for language instructors that aim at developing in students the ability to carry out **educated assertive chat**. Activities that will be presented are intended to help students develop a **comfort zone** in using conversational skills while they are in training at FSI, so that they will be enabled to interact

with host country nationals in a variety of contexts and to continue learning and developing their conversational skills at post.

We perceive the language training at FSI as the beginning of a whole new experience for our graduating students that will be put to use once they are submerged into a new culture. The better they are prepared to understand that culture, the better they will function in it while representing the American values and interests.